

May 16, 2008

Mr. Gerard J. Arpey  
Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer  
AMR Corporation/American Airlines, Inc.  
4333 Amon Carter Boulevard  
Fort Worth, TX 76155

The Honorable Robert A. Sturgell  
Acting Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
800 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Mr. Arpey and Acting Administrator Sturgell:

Thank you for your May 2 report on American Airlines' ("American") grounding of its MD-80 aircraft fleet between April 8 and April 12. As you know, I requested reports from both American and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) detailing what happened, why it happened and what, if anything, might have been done to prevent such a significant disruption.

The safety of aircraft and all those on board is, and should always be, our top priority. I know you share this commitment. Let me be clear that the purpose of my request was not to assign blame or pass judgment, but to learn from our combined experiences and take every possible step to avoid another situation where hundreds of thousands of travelers are stranded due to massive and abrupt flight cancellations.

After reviewing both reports, it is clear that there are lessons to be learned from what happened last month. I am encouraged that both American and the FAA agree that aviation safety deadlines must always be met on time, without exception and without excuse.

It is also clear to me that communications can be improved between the FAA and airlines when safety inspection disputes are raised. We need to make sure that key people, from inspectors and maintenance crews to senior management, have the right information if situations like this evolve in the future so they can make informed decisions based on one concern alone – the safety of the traveling public. I am asking you, as well as others in the industry, to review protocols and make sure that significant safety decisions are made

using a clearly documented process. I am encouraged to hear that these conversations are already taking place, and I look forward to seeing the results.

The two reports also raise questions about the process in place to allow airlines to use different, but potentially equally effective, solutions for complying with Airworthiness Directives (AD). This process, known as an Alternative Means of Compliance (AMOC), is designed to give airlines and aircraft manufacturers the flexibility to repair and maintain aircraft while ensuring the highest levels of safety.

As was noted in American's report, officials with American sent the FAA a request for alternative compliance almost two months after the deadline for complying with the original AD. American thought they submitted an AMOC, but it was not in a form that would allow FAA to appropriately move it through the standard AMOC process. As a result, I am asking you to examine the current protocols for allowing alternative solutions for complying with ADs. I want to make sure that the FAA, airlines and aircraft manufacturers are clear about the timing of AMOC requests, the manner in which they should be requested, and the criteria to be applied for accepting or denying such a request.

The FAA is the ultimate arbiter of what constitutes a safety of flight issue and whether that issue has been properly addressed. The fact is our aviation laws demand that the FAA is ultimately responsible for making the decision as to when an aircraft is safe to fly, and when it is not.

I strongly believe that we owe it to the public to thoroughly examine incidents like the one that led to the grounding of a significant portion of American's MD-80 fleet last month. We can always learn from our past experiences and can always find ways to make the process work better for the safety and convenience of the traveling public. We must never shy away from asking tough questions, demanding good answers and expecting appropriate improvements.

As I noted above, the purpose of this exercise was to find solutions to ensure events like these are avoided, if possible. That is why I will be sending both the reports to the national safety inspection review team I established last month. I will be asking this team to review these reports as well, and to include any relevant findings they draw from them in their comprehensive recommendations that are due later this year.

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Messrs. Arpey and Sturgell

I would like to extend my appreciation in advance for taking the time and effort to promptly follow through on the issues I identified above. Thank you for your continuing commitment to aviation safety.

Sincerely yours,

Mary E. Peters